

RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF SPECIAL NEEDS
SCHOOL SUPPORT SYSTEM

TIDES LEARNING CENTER

JANUARY 2001

SCHOOL SUPPORT SYSTEM

Introduction

The purpose of the School Support System (SSS) is to provide a means of accountability for delivery of programs and services for students with disabilities. The SSS model is designed to promote the involvement of the Private school (or State Agency) special educators and parents. It is designed to learn if the Private school (or State Agency) meets the minimum regulations and what effects the programs and services have on student performances. Finally, the SSS develops a support plan for training and technical assistance.

To accomplish this, the SSS includes these components:

- ♦ The Orientation Meeting The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) staff meets with the Private Special Education School (or State Agency) representatives to plan the site visit and identify issues or initiatives that may influence programs or service delivery.
- ♦ Data Analysis Meeting The RIDE staff meets to review demographic information on selected reports including: Private (or State Agency) Special Education School Application for Approval, census information, and information collected through record review, staff questionnaires and parent interviews. To ensure that the child is at the center of the study, all analyses begin with the child. Thus, a sample of approximately 5 to 10 percent of students with disabilities is selected; the records of these students are reviewed; their parents, teachers and related service providers are interviewed; and their classrooms are observed. The result is an in-depth, unified examination of the actual provision of programs and services for students with disabilities. The RIDE staff compiles a preliminary summary of their analyses of these data.
- ♦ Presentation by the Private (or State Agency) Special Education School and School Site Visit The site visit begins with a presentation of programs by staff. The presentation provides the visiting team with general and specific information on delivery of programs and services to students. Following this presentation, visits to the school are made. The team members interview school administrators and teaching staff. The team gathers sufficient information and works with the Private (or State Agency) Special Education School personnel to generate a report covering the following:
 - The school's (or state agency's) compliance with the state and federal regulations, relative to the education of students with disabilities.
 - The quality and effectiveness of programs and services provided by the school (or state agency).
 - The need for professional development and technical assistance that will enable the school (or state agency) to improve programs and services.

- ♦ The Support Plan The RIDE team and the Private (or State Agency) Special Education School administrator(s) meet to review the data and complete a report of results. The group designs a support plan with timelines for implementation. This plan enables the school (or state agency) to correct areas of non-compliance and to strengthen promising programs and correct areas of weakness in order to improve services and programs for all students.
- ♦ The SSS Report The report summarizes the findings from the various data sources. The format of the report uses four divisions: indicators, findings, documentation and support plan. Indicators either describe performance or compliance. Findings can include a variety of some fifteen categories, from school improvement to the least restrictive environment. The documentation section of the report distinguishes the source of the finding. The support plan reflects the response to the described findings. The support plan describes the corrective action required by the school (or state agency) as well as that RIDE will assist the school (or state agency) to improve programs and services.

TIDES LEARNING CENTER

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	<p>Tides Learning Center is an educational arm of Tides Family Services, which, in turn, is a not-for-profit social service agency operating as a unit of the DeLaSalle Christian Brothers. Tides Family Services is a self supporting corporation which commits its resources to assisting children and their families who are economically disadvantaged and most at risk. Tides Family Services, as a consequence concentrates its services in urban communities. Tides Family Services provides six (6) functional components, including the Learning Center. These components are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Outreach and Tracking Program. This program is geared for youth involved with the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. The program promotes family preservation and school completion. Social work staff have face to face contact with youth and their families three times a day, every day of the week. This program is provided in Pawtucket, Central Falls and Woonsocket. ➤ Youth New Futures. This is an intensive supervision program for youth returning home from the Rhode Island Training School or being monitored by juvenile probation. These services are provided in Pawtucket, Central Falls and Providence. ➤ Day Reporting Center. This is also an intensive supervision program for youth returning home from the Rhode Island Training School or being monitored by juvenile probation. These services are provided in and for South Providence. ➤ Youth Diversion Program. This is an early intervention program for youth not yet involved in the juvenile justice system. The focus is on keeping youth out of trouble with law enforcement and in school. Services are provided in West Warwick and Pawtucket. ➤ Latino Outreach Project. A counseling program for children and families with bilingual/Spanish speaking staff, specifically designed to meet the needs of Hispanic speaking communities in Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, Woonsocket, and West Warwick. 	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Document Review</p> <p>Observation</p> <p>Staff Interviews</p> <p>Staff Survey</p>	

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SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT (cont.)

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
	<p>➤ Tides Learning Center. An alternative education program for at-risk students who exhibit emotional disturbance diagnostically and lack behavioral/social skills preventing them from functioning in school/community, family and social contexts. The program uses individualized educational programs and counseling services to promote academic achievement and appropriate behavioral/social skills. Tides Learning Center provides a combination of education and social work in a unified manner. The school program is in its second year of approval as a special education middle through senior high day school. The school program's main site is at 242 Dexter Street, Pawtucket, RI serving mainly Central Falls and Pawtucket students, currently numbering 17 with an enrollment capacity of about 25. Satellite programs exist in Providence at 790 Broad Street, enrolling 5 students, with a capacity of between 15 - 20 students and West Warwick, 222 Washington Street, 9 students enrolled with a second classroom scheduled to open this spring expanding capacity by twice to 20 students. The satellite programs serve Providence and West Warwick students primarily.</p>		
Performance/ Compliance	While all current tuitioned students have IEP's, the Providence satellite program also serves up to 10 students who "walk-in" and have difficulty with enrolling in the Providence School Department. Tides Learning Center administrators have requested assistance from the Rhode Island Department of Education's Legal Office as well as the Office of Special Needs.	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Document Review</p> <p>Staff Interviews</p>	
Performance	Tides Learning Center's mission of serving youth and young adults "at risk" for or having been suspended or excluded from public school necessitates a broader diagnostic/program focus than special education allows. The School Support Team commends Tides Learning Center for seeking regular private school approval. Dual school approval should promote higher academic standards, diploma granting options, recruiting academic staff, using certified special education staff more flexibly, and provide a more well rounded educational alternative for students not considered for viable transitioning back to public schools.	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Document Review</p> <p>Staff Interviews</p>	

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SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT (cont.)

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	Tides Learning Center administrators and staff support the overall mission of providing a more flexible learning environment for young adults who are at risk for or have been suspended/excluded from public schools. Staff express a unified belief that Tides Learning Center can significantly impact behavior and attitudes while promoting knowledge and skill acquisition.	Staff Interviews Staff Survey Presentation Observation	
Performance	Tides Learning Center's overall strategy provides short-term and long-term alternative education settings, as well as assisting public schools to provide more effective in school strategies for those pupils who are disruptive. Youth Diversion Program works with mental health centers, schools, police, the Family Court, and parents to keep youth from entering the juvenile justice system. Tides provides after school programming cooperating with the West Warwick School Department. Tides works with public school department administrators and teachers on behavioral issues and approaches.	Presentation Document Review Staff Interviews	
Performance	The School Support Team commends Tides Learning Center for proactive positions to expand educational/classroom renovation at its West Warwick and Providence satellites. Tides Learning Center has just received authorization from Providence municipal authorities to renovate.	Presentation Staff Interviews Staff Survey	
Performance	Tides Learning Center uses very proficient and thorough vocational assessments provided by the Northern Rhode Island Collaborative. Tides Learning Center is working to establish a systemic method for referrals to the Office of Rehabilitative Services for those students in need of transition for follow-up adult vocational services and assessments.	Staff Interviews Record Review	

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SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT (cont.)

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	<p>Tides Learning Center strategy emphasizes an individualized programming designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ transition students into public school placements; ➤ provide alternative discipline methods associated with improving social decision-making skills; ➤ provide counseling services that promote positive change with transitioning to public school placements; ➤ provide flexible school scheduling arrangements allowing, when necessary, longer Tides program placement, as well as dual enrolment arrangements. ➤ work with the Community College of Rhode Island on a Cooperative Services Program; ➤ review possible Charter School status; ➤ develop a vocational program with a building and construction focus working with nearby lumber and building contractors and grants for food service programs; ➤ develop GED and job placement as possible outcomes for students in need of these transition services; ➤ develop a college affiliation program (e.g. St. Mary's College in Minnesota); and ➤ add technology in all programs as a teaching and learning tool. 	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Document Review</p> <p>Staff Interviews</p>	<p>Tides Learning Center may want to develop additional narrative materials which characterizes its broad range of services, partnerships with public and private agencies and businesses. It is recommended that Tides Learning Center develop a video overview as it adds to its programming and facilities.</p> <p>As the Tides Learning Center Technology Plan is implemented, it is recommended that additional professional development in selected curriculum areas (e.g. Mathematics, science, history, career education, reading skills), interdisciplinary and thematic instruction for teachers and teacher assistants be given high priority. This should reinforce diversification of instructional strategies for students with disabilities.</p>

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GOOD TEACHING PRACTICES

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	Tides Learning Center in Pawtucket uses the Central Falls Library in its academic program for additional narrative materials, research projects, and computer usage. The academic rationale complements Tides Learning Center philosophy and mission of being part of a <u>Community</u> as well as reintegrating their students.	Staff Interviews Presentation	
Performance	Tides Learning Center in Pawtucket and West Warwick post behavioral expectations in classrooms.	Observation	
Performance	Tides Learning Center in Pawtucket uses special education teaching personnel to provide both resource class support and regular classroom support and consultation.	Staff Interviews Document Review Observation	
Performance	Tides Learning Center gears its instruction to actual student levels. Class sizes vary from five (5) to ten (10) at most. Tides Learning Center rotates teachers rather than using an exclusive self-contained program model.	Presentation Staff Interviews Document Review Observation	
Performance	Tides Learning Center in Pawtucket rents a nearby Pawtucket YMCA for use in its physical education and recreational programs. This includes swimming and basketball activities. The Pawtucket site has sufficient space for a gymnasium and physical education/recreation activities. Tides Learning Center administrators are considering renovating/developing this space for such purposes.	Staff Interviews Observation	
Performance	Tides Learning Center has added award ceremonies for students in various academic/behavioral areas. This approach is consistent with promoting positive attitudes and encouraging acquisition of appropriate social/behavioral skills.	Staff Interviews	

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GOOD TEACHING PRACTICES (cont.)

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	Tides Outreach and Tracking Program complements Tides Learning Center academic assignments by providing follow up with families and checking on completion of homework with students absent because of illness. Tracking is done on a face to face basis daily.	Staff Interviews Document Review	
Performance	Tides Learning Center classrooms in Pawtucket and West Warwick have behavioral expectations posted. Classrooms exhibit the use of a variety of current instructional materials, use of thematic topics for written language development. Computers are used extensively for word processing skills.	Observation Staff Interviews	
Performance	Tides Learning Center in Providence has partnered with AS220, a professional art organization, which provides visual arts instruction. This program/activity uses a very low staff to student ratio (1:2/3) at a program site which attracts "walk-in" students not enrolled in the Providence School District. The School Support Team commends Tides Learning center for providing this option which accentuates developing visual and graphic motor activity around thematic art topics.	Observation Presentation Staff Interviews	
Performance	Tides Learning Center's West Warwick satellite students write articles for their own newsletter complementing written language skill development.	Staff Interviews	
Performance	The School Support Team commends the Tides Learning Center and Tides Youth Diversion Program for its collaborative work with the West Warwick Police, School Department, parents, and Family Court. An after school program, part of a truancy prevention effort, takes referrals from the West Warwick Middle School, vice-principal and special education referrals. Two West Warwick teachers provide tutoring, homework time, reading time, while Tides staff provide counseling and recreation. These activities and services are provided from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the West Warwick Middle School.	Presentation Staff Interviews	

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GOOD TEACHING PRACTICES (cont.)

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	Tides Learning Center follow standards and curriculum guides provided by referring school districts. Students appear to receive more individualized instructional and counseling attention at TIDES LEARNING CENTER. Classroom books, materials, and computers are the same as found in school districts.	Observation Staff Interviews Student Interviews	It is recommended that Tides Learning Center develop a school budget which can be broken down to classroom level. This should provide a more systemic method of determining educational needs within the overall Tides Family Services budget.
Performance	Tides Learning Center's West Warwick satellite provides physical education at the Coventry School Department Administration Building, which in turn is a leased site. That facility contains a standard gymnasium. Tides Learning Center is planning to construct a basketball court adjoining its administrative offices. It is also seeking to use the Kent County YMCA to expand its physical education program options.	Staff Interviews Observation	It is recommended that Tides Learning Center add to its narrative literature characterizing its instructional program more detail regarding physical education programming and how it fits its' educational and social/behavioral skill approach.
Performance	Tides Family Services Executive Director meets with all coordinators, including the Tides Learning Center Special Education Director and middle management staff at least once a month. School staff appear to meet daily. However, it is difficult for a Special Education Director to meet with staff as often as staff might benefit, given three school sites, in Pawtucket, Providence, and West Warwick,	Staff Surveys Staff Interviews Observation	It is recommended that cyclically scheduled meetings, including, the Special Education Director with each site's school staff be held. For example, this might be done one or two times per ten day cycle. This may have even greater impact on new faculty as classes and programs expand at the Providence and West Warwick sites.

TIDES LEARNING CENTER

FREE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION (FAPE)

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	Tides Learning Center goals and objectives emphasize preparing students to return to resident school districts and home schools. This is particularly noticeable at middle/junior high school levels. Tides works closely with sending schools at intake and in transition. Tides uses partial and short-term daily participation with referring school districts. Tides Outreach and Tracking works closely in both intake and transition processes. A more intensive social worker tracking supervises and supports students and their families particularly in the Providence and Pawtucket sites.	Presentation Staff Interviews Document Review	It is recommended that Tides Learning Center Outcomes Measurement outlined in the School Approval Application be implemented subsequent to satellite classroom expansion. This should help to determine transition effectiveness as well obtain customer satisfaction surveys.
Performance	<p>Tides Learning Center provides a predictable and systemic behavioral support system. The school provides a therapeutic approach utilizing individual and small group counseling for students and their families. Reality therapy, conflict resolution, anger management techniques, and development of sound social decision-making to assist students making good behavioral choices are employed. Tides Learning Center uses a system identified as Problem Tracking. This system identifies past problem behaviors, current behaviors and problems, student problem solving, and contracts. Level and token systems are used to reinforce appropriate behaviors. Staff have been trained on non-violent crisis intervention techniques, excluding restraint protocols. Tides Learning Center has available use of time out areas that are under direct teacher, teacher assistant, and counselor observation.</p> <p>Tides Learning Center also utilizes as part of counseling services, event frameworks--an approach for students to recognize situations where they may be headed for trouble, looks for ways to avoid trouble, and make choices of how best to handle these situations by looking at events that caused problems in the recent past.</p>	Staff Interviews Document Review Record Review Presentation	Tides Learning Center should consider developing a Policies and Procedures Manual for school staff. The manual could cover contingencies as well uniform staff expectations.
Performance	<p>Tides Learning Center staff believe they must improve documentation of student progress towards measurable IEP objectives.</p> <p>Tides Learning Center staff believe additional IEP training is needed.</p>	Staff Surveys Staff Interviews Record Review	Tides Learning Center has arranged for additional IEP training by the Rhode Island Department of Education's Office of Special Needs.

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FREE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION (FAPE) (cont.)

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	Tides Learning Center School Application identifies mental retardation, as well as emotional disturbance, other health impairment, and specific learning disabilities as a category of student served in the school program. Staff interviews suggested that this disability category should be reviewed and reconsidered.	Staff Interviews Document Review	Tides Learning Center may want to reconsider this category for placement and service.
Performance/ Compliance	Some student files did not have current evaluations. Tides Learning Center has contacted two referring school districts for missing evaluations.	BIE 2 BIE 3	Tides Learning Center may need to pursue complete evaluation records more vigorously at intake meetings with referring school district personnel.

TIDES LEARNING CENTER

FAPE - PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance/ Compliance	Based on analysis of the complaint/mediation/and hearing system within the last year and a half, the Tides Learning Center appears to resolve the majority of issues at the school level.	RIDE Complaint Management and Hearing Systems	
Performance	Some staff indicated a need for more review and access to Tides Learning Center confidentiality policies and procedures.	Staff Surveys Staff Interviews	Tides Learning Center should review current overviews and instructions regarding confidentiality and access to records procedures. Tides Learning Center may request from the Rhode Island Department of Education Office of Special Needs, additional legal inservice specifically targeting this topic.

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PARENT PARTICIPATION

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	<p>The Tides Learning Center works in partnership with referring school districts and parents. There appears to be frequent communication between staff, particularly social workers and parents.</p> <p>The School Support Team commends Tides Latino Outreach Project which provides bilingual/Spanish speaking social services to families and students. Parent support group has been added to Tides Learning Center services in the evening at the Pawtucket site. The Latino Outreach Project now operates in Pawtucket and Providence sites.</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Parent Interview</p> <p>Staff Interview</p> <p>Documentation</p>	

TIDES LEARNING CENTER

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

INDICATORS	FINDINGS	DOCUMENTATION	SUPPORT PLAN
Performance	<p>The Tides Learning Center staff receive on going professional development. In service meetings, in-house staff development meetings, participation in State training programs, and conferences are used for professional development. Staff have trained in behavior management techniques, social contracting, de-escalation techniques, confidentiality, IEP development and implementation, technology adaptation, and CPR/First Aid.</p> <p>Most teachers, teaching assistants, and administrators indicated a desire for more training connected to increasing student achievement and responding to the needs of students with disabilities.</p>	<p>Staff Surveys</p> <p>Staff Interview</p> <p>Document Review</p>	<p>Tides Learning Center is seeking additional training from the Rhode Island Department of Education's Office of Special Needs Services. Tides Learning Center can also contact the Rhode Island Department of Education's Office of Instruction for training and professional development connected to reading, math and science.</p>